

INFORMATIONAL

House Bill 730

Education – Public Middle Schools – Course on Collateral Consequences of a Criminal Conviction

Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment

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The Maryland State Education Association offers this informational testimony on House Bill 730, which would require the State Department of Education to develop an instructive program on the collateral consequences of a criminal conviction for public middle school students in the State that aims to teach students in grades 6-8 about the collateral consequences of a criminal conviction in a short period of time.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

MSEA tenaciously advocates for the policies and programs that will give our students access to the resources and knowledge they need to achieve their full potential. We understand that our students' wellbeing and awareness of high-risk behaviors affects their academic and nonacademic outcomes. Yet MSEA has longstanding concerns about legislatively mandating the creation of new curricular programming, and we believe that it is the responsibility of local districts to determine how best to implement a program of study that serves the needs of their students.

We appreciate the intent of this legislation. However, creating a program related to criminal convictions that will be directed specifically at students assigned to exclusionary discipline has troubling implications, and we do not believe it is appropriate to mandate additional coursework in this manner. We are further concerned by the ambiguity of the format of the required programming and its mode of implementation. MSEA believes that local boards and educators are best suited to determine how best to address such issues in existing courses.